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ARBOR DAY IN POETRY

POEMS CHOSEN BY A
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SCHOOL ASSOCIATION



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PREFACE

Poems which deal directly with the idea of tree planting, of trees and of the strength and joy to be had from contact with the soil are included in this volume. Those poems depicting the many-sided joys of spring which might well come under this heading are reserved for a future booklet devoted wholly to this subject. The poems are within a child's comprehension.

As in the other booklets of this series, the poems are printed on one side of the page only so that they may be mounted and used separately if desired.

The proceeds derived from the publication of these booklets are used to increase the Student Loan Fund of the Association.

Mildred P. Harrington
Chairman of the Poetry Committee
Carnegie Library School Association

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A B C'S IN GREEN

The trees are God's great alphabet:
With them He writes in shining green
Across the world His thoughts serene.
He scribbles poems against the sky
With a gay, leafy lettering,
For us and for our bettering.

The wind pulls softly at His page,
And every star and bird
Repeats in dutiful delight His word,
And every blade of grass
Flutters to class.

Like a slow child that does not heed,
I stand at summer's knees,
And from the primer of the wood
I spell that life and love are good,
I learn to read.

Leonora Speyer.

Included by permission of the author.

APPLE-SEED JOHN

Poor Johnny was bended well nigh double
With years of toil, and care, and trouble;
But his large old heart still felt the need
Of doing for others some kindly deed.

“But what can I do?” old Johnny said:
“I who work so hard for daily bread?
It takes heaps of money to do much good;
I am far too poor to do as I would.”

The old man sat thinking deeply a while,
Then over his features gleamed a smile,
And he clapped his hands with a boyish glee,
And said to himself: “There’s a way for me!”

He worked, and he worked with might and main,
But no one knew the plan in his brain.
He took ripe apples in pay for chores,
And carefully cut from them all the cores.

He filled a bag full, then wandered away,
And no man saw him for many a day.
With knapsack over his shoulder slung,
He marched along, and whistled or sung.

He seemed to roam with no object in view,
Like one who had nothing on earth to do;
But, journeying thus o’er the prairies wide,
He paused now and then, and his bag untied.

With pointed cane deep holes he would bore,
And in every hole he placed a core;
Then covered them well, and left them there
In keeping of sunshine, rain, and air.

Sometimes for days he waded through grass,
And saw not a living creature pass,
But often, when sinking to sleep in the dark,
He heard the owls hoot and the prairie-dogs bark.

Sometimes an Indian of sturdy limb
Came striding along and walked with him;
And he who had food shared with the other,
As if he had met a hungry brother.

When the Indian saw how the bag was filled,
And looked at the holes that the white man drilled,
He thought to himself 'twas a silly plan
To be planting seed for some future man.

Sometimes a log cabin came in view,
Where Johnny was sure to find jobs to do,
By which he gained stores of bread and meat,
And welcome rest for his weary feet.

He had full many a story to tell,
And goodly hymns that he sung right well;
He tossed up the babes, and joined the boys
In many a game full of fun and noise.

And he seemed so hearty, in work or play,
Men, women, and boys all urged him to stay;
But he always said: "I have something to do,
And I must go on to carry it through."

The boys, who were sure to follow him round,
Soon found what it was he put in the ground;
And so, as time passed and he traveled on,
Ev'ry one called him "Old Apple-Seed John."

Whenever he'd used the whole of his store,
He went into cities and worked for more;
Then he marched back to the wilds again,
And planted seed on hill-side and plain.

In cities, some said the old man was crazy;
While others said he was only lazy;
But he took no notice of gibes and jeers,
He knew he was working for future years.

He knew that trees would soon abound
Where once a tree could not have been found;
That a flick'ring play of light and shade
Would dance and glimmer along the glade;

That blossoming sprays would form fair bowers,
And sprinkle the grass with rosy showers;
And the little seeds his hands had spread,
Would become ripe apples when he was dead.

So he kept on traveling far and wide,
Till his old limbs failed him, and he died.
He said at the last: "'Tis a comfort to feel
I've done good in the world, though not a great deal."

Weary travelers, journeying west,
In the shade of his trees find pleasant rest;
And they often start, with glad surprise,
At the rosy fruit that round them lies.

And if they inquire whence came such trees,
Where not a bough once swayed in the breeze,
The answer still comes, as they travel on:
"Those trees were planted by Apple-Seed John."

Lydia Maria Child.

AN ARBOR DAY TREE

Dear little tree that we plant to-day,
What will you be when we're old and gray?
"The savings bank of the squirrel and mouse,
For robin and wren an apartment house,
The dressing-room of the butterfly's ball,
The locust's and katydid's concert hall,
The schoolboy's ladder in pleasant June,
The schoolgirl's tent in the July noon,
And my leaves shall whisper them merrily
A tale of the children who planted me."

Unknown.

*From "Arbor Day" by R. H. Schauffler.
Included by permission of Dodd, Mead and Company.*

BE DEFERENT TO TREES

The talking oak
To the ancients spoke.

But any tree
Will talk to me.

What truths I know
I garnered so.

But those who want to talk and tell,
And those who will not listeners be,
Will never hear a syllable
From out the lips of any tree.

Mary Carolyn Davies.

BEATUS VIR

Happy is the man who loves the woods and waters,
Brother to the grass, and well-beloved of Pan;
The earth shall be his, and all her laughing daughters—
Happy the man.

Never grows he old, nor shall he taste of sorrow,
Happy at the day's end as when the day began,
Yesterday forgotten, unshadowed by To-morrow,—
Happy the man.

Followed by the mountains, ne'er his heart is lonely,
Talked to all day by rivers as they run,
The earth is his love, as he who loves one only—
Happy the man.

His gossips are the stars, and the moon-rise his tavern;
He who seeks a better, find it if he can—
And O his sweet pillow in the ferny cavern!
Happy the man.

Richard Le Gallienne.

BIRCH TREES

The night is white,
The moon is high,
The birch trees lean
Against the sky.

The cruel winds
Have blown away
Each little leaf
Of silver gray.

O lonely trees
As white as wool—
That moonlight makes
So beautiful.

John Richard Moreland.

*From The Personalist, University of Southern California.
Included by permission of the author.*

CHILD'S SONG IN SPRING

The silver birch is a dainty lady,
She wears a satin gown;
The elm-tree makes the old church-yard shady,
She will not live in town.

The English oak is a sturdy fellow,
He gets his green coat late;
The willow is smart in a suit of yellow,
While brown the beech-trees wait.

Such a gay green gown God gives the larches—
As green as He is good!
The hazels hold up their arms for arches
When Spring rides through the wood.

The chestnut's proud and the lilac's pretty,
The poplar's gentle and tall,
But the plane-tree's kind to the poor dull city—
I love him best of all!

E. Nesbit.

DAPHNE

Do you not hear her song
When rosy showers fall
And forest whispers call
Along?

Do you not hear her feet
Now faint among the leaves—
Or is't the wind that grieves
So sweet?

Do you her face not see
'Mid laurels of a glade
Where sunbeams pass—half maid
Half tree?

Thomas S. Jones, Jr.

FAMILY TREES

You boast about your ancient line,
But listen, stranger, unto mine:

You trace your lineage afar,
Back to the heroes of a war
Fought that a country might be free;
Yea, farther—to a stormy sea
Where winter's angry billows tossed,
O'er which your Pilgrim Fathers crossed.
Nay, more—through yellow, dusty tomes
You trace your name to English homes
Before the distant, unknown West
Lay open to a world's behest;
Yea, back to days of those Crusades
When Turk and Christian crossed their blades,
You point with pride to ancient names,
To powdered sires and painted dames;
You boast of this—your family tree;
Now listen, stranger, unto me:

When armored knights and gallant squires,
Your own beloved, honored sires,
Were in their infants' blankets rolled,
My fathers' youngest sons were old;
When they broke forth in infant tears
My fathers' heads were crowned with years,
Yea, ere the mighty Saxon host,
Of which you sing, had touched the coast,
Looked back as far as you look now,
Yea, when the Druids trod the wood,
My venerable fathers stood
And gazed through misty centuries
As far as even Memory sees.

When Britain's eldest first beheld
The light, my fathers then were old.
You of the splendid ancestry,
Who boast about your family tree,

Consider, stranger, this of mine—
Bethink the lineage of a Pine.

Douglas Malloch.

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THE FATE OF THE OAK

The owl to her mate is calling;
The river his hoarse song sings;
But the oak is marked for falling,
That has stood for a hundred springs.
Hark! a blow, and a dull sound follows;
A second—he bows his head;
A third—and the wood's dark hollows
Now know that their king is dead.

His arms from their trunk are riven;
His body all barked and squared;
And he's now, like a felon, driven
In chains to the strong dock-yard!
He's sawn through the middle, and turned
For the ribs of a frigate free;
And he's caulked, and pitched, and burned;
And now—he is fit for sea!

Oh! now—with his wings outspread
Like a ghost (if a ghost may be),
He will triumph again, though dead,
And be dreaded in every sea:
The lightning will blaze about,
And wrap him in flaming pride:
And the thunder-loud cannon will shout,
In the fight, from his bold broadside.

And when he has fought, and won,
And been honoured from shore to shore;
And his journey on earth is done,—
Why, what can he ask for more?
There is nought that a king can claim,
Or a poet or warrior bold,
Save a rhyme and a short-lived name,
And to mix with the common mould!

Barry Cornwall.

*From "One Thousand Poems for Children" by Ingpen.
Included by permission of Macrae Smith Company.*

THE FIR-TREE

O singing Wind
Searching field and wood,
Canst thou find
Aught that's sweet or good,—
Flowers, to kiss awake,
Or dewy grass, to shake,
Or feathered seed
Aloft to speed?

Replies the wind:
"I cannot find
Flowers, to kiss awake,
Or dewy grass to shake,
Or feathered seed
Aloft to speed;
Yet I meet
Something sweet,
When the scented fir—
Balsam-breathing fir—
In my flight I stir.

Edith M. Thomas.

Included by permission of Houghton, Mifflin Company.

GREEN THINGS GROWING

O the green things growing, the green things growing,
The faint sweet smell of the green things growing!
I should like to live, whether I smile or grieve,
Just to watch the happy life of my green things growing.

O the fluttering and the pattering of those green things growing!
How they talk each to each, when none of us are knowing;
In the wonderful white of the weird moonlight
Or the dim dreamy dawn when the cocks are crowing.

I love, I love them so—my green things growing!
And I think that they love me, without false showing;
For by many a tender touch, they comfort me so much,
With the soft mute comfort of green things growing.

And in the rich store of their blossoms glowing
Ten for one I take they're on me bestowing:
Oh, I should like to see, if God's will it may be,
Many, many a summer of my green things growing!

But if I must be gathered for the angel's sowing,
Sleep out of sight awhile, like the green things growing,
Though dust to dust return, I think I'll scarcely mourn,
If I may change into green things growing.

Dinah Maria Mulock Craik.

THE HEART OF THE TREE

What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants the friend of sun and sky;
He plants the flag of breezes free;
The shaft of beauty, towering high;
He plants a home to heaven anigh
For song and mother-croon of bird
In hushed and happy twilight heard—
The treble of heaven's harmony—
These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants cool shade and tender rain,
And seed and bud of days to be,
And years that fade and flush again;
He plants the glory of the plain;
He plants the forest's heritage;
The harvest of a coming age;
The joy that unborn eyes shall see—
These things he plants who plants a tree.

What does he plant who plants a tree?
He plants, in sap and leaf and wood,
In love of home and loyalty
And far-cast thought of civic good—
His blessings on the neighborhood
When in the hollow of His hand
Holds all the growth of all our land—
A nation's growth from sea to sea
Stirs in his heart who plants a tree.

Henry Cuyler Bunner.

"From Poems of H. C. Bunner; copyright, 1884, 1899, by Charles Scribner's Sons." Included by permission of the publishers.

HIAWATHA'S SAILING

"Give me of your bark, O Birch-tree!
Of your yellow bark, O Birch-tree!
Growing by the rushing river,
Tall and stately in the valley!
I a light canoe will build me,
Build a swift Cheemaun for sailing,
That shall float upon the river,
Like a yellow leaf in Autumn,
Like a yellow water-lily!

"Lay aside your cloak, O Birch-tree!
Lay aside your white-skin wrapper,
For the Summer-time is coming,
And the sun is warm in heaven,
And you need no white-skin wrapper!"

Thus aloud cried Hiawatha
In the solitary forest,
By the rushing Taquamenaw,
When the birds were singing gayly,
In the Moon of Leaves were singing,
And the sun, from sleep awaking,
Started up and said, "Behold me!
Gheezis, the great Sun, behold me!"
And the tree with all its branches
Rustled in the breeze of morning,
Saying with a sigh of patience,
"Take my cloak, O Hiawatha!"
With his knife the tree he girdled;
Just beneath its lowest branches,
Just above the roots, he cut it,
Till the sap came oozing outward;
Down the trunk, from top to bottom,
Sheer he cleft the bark asunder,
With a wooden wedge he raised it,
Stripped it from the trunk unbroken.

"Give me of your boughs, O Cedar!
Of your strong and pliant branches,
My canoe to make more steady,
Make more strong and firm beneath me!"

Through the summit of the Cedar
Went a sound, a cry of horror,
Went a murmur of resistance;
But it whispered, bending downward,
"Take my boughs, O Hiawatha!"
Down he hewed the boughs of cedar,
Shaped them straightway to a framework,
Like two bows he formed and shaped them
Like two bended bows together.

"Give me of your roots, O Tamarack!
Of your fibrous roots, O Larch-tree!
My canoe to bind together,
So to bind the ends together
That the water may not enter,
That the river may not wet me!"

And the Larch, with all its fibres,
Shivered in the air of morning,
Touched his forehead with its tassels,
Said, with one long sigh of sorrow,
"Take them all, O Hiawatha!"
From the earth he tore the fibres,
Tore the tough roots of the Larch-tree,
Closely sewed the bark together,
Bound it closely to the framework,

"Give me of your balm, O Fir-tree!
Of your balsam and your resin,
So to close the seams together
That the water may not enter,
That the river may not wet me!"

And the Fir-tree, tall and sombre,
Sobbed through all its robes of darkness,
Rattled like a shore with pebbles,
Answered wailing, answered weeping,
"Take my balm, O Hiawatha!"
And he took the tears of balsam,
Took the resin of the Fir-tree,
Smeared therewith each seam and fissure,
Made each crevice safe from water.

"Give me of your quills, O Hedgehog!
All your quills, O Kagh, the Hedgehog!"

I will make a necklace of them,
Make a girdle for my beauty,
And two stars to deck her bosom!"

From a hollow tree the Hedgehog
With his sleepy eyes looked at him,
Shot his shining quills, like arrows,
Saying with a drowsy murmur,
Through the tangle of his whiskers,
"Take my quills, O Hiawatha!"
From the ground the quills he gathered,
All the little shining arrows,
Stained them red and blue and yellow,
With the juice of roots and berries;
Into his canoe he wrought them,
Round its waist a shining girdle,
Round its bows a gleaming necklace,
On its breast two stars resplendent.

Thus the Birch Canoe was builded
In the valley, by the river,
In the bosom of the forest;
And the forest's life was in it,
All its mystery and its magic,
All the lightness of the birch-tree,
All the toughness of the cedar,
All the larch's supple sinews;
And it floated on the river
Like a yellow leaf in Autumn,
Like a yellow water-lily.

Selected

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Included by permission of Houghton, Mifflin Company.

KINDS OF TREES TO PLANT

The sailing Pine; the Cedar, proud and tall;
The vine-prop Elm; the Poplar, never dry;
The builder Oak, sole king of forests all;
The Aspen, good for staves; the Cypress, funeral;
The Laurel, meed for mighty conquerors
And poets sage; the Fir, that weepeth still;
The Willow, worn of hopeless paramours;
The Yew, obedient to the bender's will;
The Birch, for shafts; the Sallow, for the mill;
The warlike Beech; the Ash, for nothing ill;
The fruitful Apple, and the Platane round;
The carver Holm; the Maple seldom inward sound.

Selected

Edmund Spenser

MINE HOST OF "THE GOLDEN APPLES"

A goodly host one day was mine,
A Golden Apple his only sign,
That hung from a long branch, ripe and fine.

My host was the bountiful apple-tree;
He gave me shelter and nourished me
With the best of fare, all fresh and free.

And light-winged guests came not a few,
To his leafy inn, and sipped the dew,
And sang their best songs ere they flew.

I slept at night on a downy bed
Of moss, and my Host benignly spread
His own cool shadow over my head.

When I asked what reckoning there might be,
He shook his broad boughs cheerily:—
A blessing be thine, green Apple-tree!

Thomas Westwood.

THE OAK

The monarch oak, the patriarch of the trees,
Shoots slowly up, and spreads by slow degrees;
Three centuries he grows, and three he stays
Supreme in state, and in three more decays.

John Dryden.

OH, FAIR TO SEE

Oh, fair to see
Bloom-laden cherry tree,
 Arrayed in sunny white:
 An April day's delight,
Oh, fair to see!

Oh, fair to see
Fruit-laden cherry tree,
 With balls of shining red
 Decking a leafy head,
Oh, fair to see!

Christina G. Rossetti.

*From "Poems" by Christina G. Rossetti.
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THE PINE

The Elm lets fall its leaves before the frost,
The very oak grows shivering with fear,
The trees are barren when the summer's lost:
But one tree keeps its goodness all the year.

Green pine, unchanging as the days go by,
Thou art thyself beneath whatever sky:
My shelter from all winds, my own strong pine,
'Tis Spring, 'tis Summer, still, while thou art mine

Augusta Webster.

THE PLANTING OF THE APPLE-TREE

Come, let us plant the apple-tree.
Cleave the tough greensward with the spade;
Wide let its hollow bed be made;
There gently lay the roots, and there
Sift the dark mould with kindly care,
 And press it o'er them tenderly,
As round the sleeping infant's feet
We softly fold the cradle-sheet;
 So plant we the apple-tree.

What plant we in this apple-tree?
Buds, which the breath of summer days
Shall lengthen into leafy sprays;
Boughs where the thrush, with crimson breast,
Shall haunt, and sing, and hide her nest;
 We plant, upon the sunny lea,
A shadow for the noontide hour,
A shelter from the summer shower,
 When we plant the apple-tree.

What plant we in this apple-tree?
Sweets for a hundred flowery springs,
To load the May-wind's restless wings,
When, from the orchard-row, it pours
Its fragrance through our open doors;
 A world of blossoms for the bee,
Flowers for the sick girl's silent room,
For the glad infant sprigs of bloom,
 We plant with the apple-tree.

What plant we in this apple-tree?
Fruits that shall swell in sunny June,
And redden in the August noon,
And drop, when gentle airs come by,
That fan the blue September sky,
While children come, with cries of glee,
And seek them where the fragrant grass
Betrays their bed to those who pass,
At the foot of the apple-tree.

.

William Cullen Bryant.

*From "The Poetical Works of William Cullen Bryant."
Included by permission of D. Appleton and Company, New York.*

PLOUGHMAN AT THE PLOUGH

He behind the straight plough stands
Stalwart, firm shafts in firm hands.

Naught he cares for wars and naught
For the fierce disease of thought.

Only for the winds, the sheer
Naked impulse of the year,

Only for the soil which stares
Clean into God's face he cares.

In the stark might of his deed
There is more than art or creed;

In his wrist more strength is hid
Than in the monstrous Pyramid;

Stauncher than stern Everest
Be the muscles of his breast;

Not the Atlantic sweeps a flood
Potent as the ploughman's blood.

He, his horse, his ploughshare, these
Are the only verities.

Dawn to dusk with God he stands,
The Earth poised on his broad hands.

Louis Golding.

THE POPLARS

My poplars are like ladies trim,
Each conscious of her own estate;
In costume somewhat over prim,
In manner cordially sedate.
Like two old neighbors met to chat
Beside my garden gate.

My stately old aristocrats—
I fancy still their talk must be
Of rose-conserves and Persian cats,
And lavender and Indian tea;—
I wonder sometimes as I pass—
If they approve of me.

I give them greeting night and morn,
I like to think they answer, too,
With that benign assurance born
When youth gives age the reverence due,
And bend their wise heads as I go
As courteous ladies do.

Long may you stand before my door,
Oh, kindly neighbors garbed in green,
And bend with rustling welcome o'er
The many friends who pass between;
And where the little children play
Look down with gracious mien.

Theodosia Garrison.

POPLARS

The poplar is a lonely tree,
It has no branches spreading wide
Where birds may sing or squirrels hide.
It throws no shadow on the grass
Tempting the wayfarers who pass
To stop and sit there quietly.

The poplar is a slender tree,
It has no boughs where children try
To climb far off into the sky,
To hold a swing it's far too weak,
Too small it is for hide-and-seek,
Friendless, forsaken it must be.

The poplar is a restless tree,
At every breeze its branches bend
And signal to the child "Come, friend."
Its leaves forever whispering
To thrush and robin, "Stay and sing,"
They pass. It quivers plaintively.

Poplars are lonely. They must grow
Close to each other in a row.

Edward Bliss Reed.

*From "Sea Moods and Other Poems" by Edward Bliss Reed.
Included by permission of Yale University Press.*

SHADE

The kindest thing God ever made,
His hand of very healing laid
Upon a fevered world, is shade.

His glorious company of trees
Throw out their mantles, and on these
The dust-stained wanderer finds ease.

Green temples, closed against the beat
Of noontime's blinding glare and heat,
Open to any pilgrim's feet.

The white road blisters in the sun;
Now, half the weary journey done,
Enter and rest, Oh, weary one!

And feel the dew of dawn still wet
Beneath thy feet, and so forget
The burning highway's ache and fret.

This is God's hospitality,
And whoso rests beneath a tree
Hath cause to thank Him gratefully.

Theodosia Garrison

SONG

For the tender beech and the sapling oak,
That grow by the shadowy rill,
You may cut down both at a single stroke,
You may cut down which you will.

But this you must know, that as long as they grow,
Whatever change may be,
You can never teach either oak or beech
To be aught but a greenwood tree.

Thomas Love Peacock.

THE SONG OF THE FOREST RANGER

Oh, to feel the fresh breeze blowing
From lone ridges yet untrod!
Oh, to see the far peak growing
Whiter as it climbs to God!

Where the silver streamlet rushes
I would follow—follow on
Till I heard the happy thrushes
Piping lyrics to the dawn.

I would hear the wild rejoicing
Of the wind-blown cedar tree,
Hear the sturdy hemlock voicing
Ancient epics of the sea.

Forest aisles would I be winding,
Out beyond the gates of Care;
And, in dim cathedrals, finding
Silence at the shrine of Prayer.

When the mystic night comes stealing
Through my vast green room afar,
Never king had richer ceiling—
Bended bough and yellow star!

Ah, to list the sacred preaching
Of the forest's faithful fir,
With his strong arms upward reaching—
Mighty, trustful worshipper!

Come and learn the joy of living!
Come and you will understand
How the sun his gold is giving
With a great, impartial hand!

How the patient pine is climbing,
Year by year to gain the sky;
How the rill makes sweetest rhyming,
Where the deepest shadows lie.

I am nearer the great Giver,
Where His handiwork is crude;
Friend am I of peak and river,
Comrade of old Solitude.

Not for me the city's riot!
Not for me the towers of Trade!
I would seek the house of Quiet,
That the Master Workman made!

Herbert Bashford.

THE SPIRIT OF THE BIRCH

I am the dancer of the wood.
I shimmer in the solitude.
Men call me Birch Tree, yet I know
In other days it was not so.
I am a Dryad slim and white
Who danced too long one summer night,
And the Dawn found and prisoned me!
Captive I moaned my liberty.
But let the wood wind flutes begin
Their elfin music, faint and thin,
I sway, I bend, retreat, advance,
And evermore—I dance! I dance!

Arthur Ketchum.

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TAPESTRY TREES

Oak

I am the Roof-tree and the Keel:
I bridge the seas for woe or weal.

Fir

High o'er the lordly oak I stand,
And drive him on from land to land.

Ash

I heft my brother's iron bane;
I shaft the spear and build the wain.

Yew

Dark down the windy dale I grow,
The father of the fateful Bow.

Poplar

The warshaft and the milking bowl
I make, and keep the hay-wain whole.

Olive

The King I bless; the lamps I trim;
In my warm wave do fishes swim.

Apple-Tree

I bowed my head to Adam's will;
The cups of toiling men I fill.

Vine

I draw the blood from out the earth;
I store the sun for winter mirth.

Orange-Tree

Amidst the greenness of my night
My odorous lamps hang round and bright.

Fig-Tree

I who am little among trees
In honey-making mate the bees.

Mulberry-Tree

Love's lack hath dyed my berries red:
For Love's attire my leaves are shed.

Pear-Tree

High o'er the mead-flowers' hidden feet
I bear aloft my burden sweet.

Bay

Look on my leafy boughs, the Crown
Of living song and dead renown!

William Morris.

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"THERE IS STRENGTH IN THE SOIL"

There is strength in the soil:
In the earth there is laughter and youth.
There is solace and hope in the upturned loam.
And lo, I shall plant my soul in it here like a seed!
And forth it shall come to me as a flower of song:
For I know it is good to get back to the earth
That is orderly, placid, all-patient!
It is good to know how quiet
And noncommittal it breathes,
This ample and opulent bosom
That must some day nurse us all!

Arthur Stringer.

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THREE TREES

The pine-tree grew in the wood,
 Tapering, straight, and high;
Stately and proud it stood,
 Black-green against the sky.
Crowded so close, it sought the blue,
And ever upward it reached and grew.

The oak-tree stood in the field.
 Beneath it dozed the herds;
It gave to the mower a shield,
 It gave a home to the birds.
Sturdy and broad, it guarded the farms
With its brawny trunk and knotted arms.

The apple-tree grew by the wall,
 Ugly and crooked and black;
But it knew the gardener's call,
 And the children rode on its back.
It scattered its blossoms upon the air,
It covered the ground with fruitage fair.

"Now, hey," said the pine, "for the wood!
 Come live with the forest band.
Our comrades will do you good,
 And tall and straight you will stand."
And he swung his boughs to a witching sound,
And flung his cones like coins around.

"O-ho!" laughed the sturdy oak;
 "The life of the field for me.
I weather the lightning-stroke;
 My branches are broad and free.
Grow straight and slim in the wood if you will,
Give me the sun and the wind-swept hill."

And the apple-tree murmured low,
 "I am neither straight nor strong;
Crooked my back doth grow
 With bearing my burdens long."
And it dropped its fruit as it dropped a tear,
And reddened the ground with fragrant cheer.

And the Lord of the harvest heard,
 And he said: "I have use for all;
For the bough that shelters the bird,
 For the beam that pillars a hall;
And grow they tall, or grow they ill,
They grow but to wait their Master's will."

So a ship of the oak was sent
 Far over the ocean blue,
And the pine was the mast that bent
 As over the waves it flew,
And the ruddy fruit of the apple-tree
Was borne to a starving isle of the sea.

Now the farmer grows like the oak,
 And the townsman is proud and tall;
The city and field are full of folk—
 But the Lord has need of all.

C. H. Crandall.

*From Deming & Bemis "Pieces for Every Day the Schools Celebrate,"
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'TIS MERRY IN GREENWOOD

'Tis merry in greenwood, thus runs the old lay,
In the gladsome month of lively May,
When the wild bird's song on stem and spray
 Invites to forest bower:
Then rears the ash his airy crest,
Then shines the birch in silver vest,
And the beech in glistening leaves is drest,
And dark between shows the oak's proud breast,
 Like a chieftain's frowning tower.

Sir Walter Scott.

THE TREE

The tree's early leaf-buds were bursting their brown.

"Shall I take them away?" said the frost sweeping down.

"No; leave them alone

Till the blossoms have grown,"

Prayed the tree, while he trembled from rootlet to crown.

The tree bore his blossoms, and all the birds sung.

"Shall I take them away?" said the wind, as he swung.

"No; leave them alone

Till the berries have grown,"

Said the tree, while his leaflets quivering hung.

The tree bore his fruit in the midsummer glow.

Said the child, "May I gather thy berries now?"

"Yes; all thou canst see;

Take them; all are for thee,"

Said the tree, while he bent down his laden boughs low.

Björnstjerne Björnson.

THE TREE

I love thee when thy swelling buds appear
 And one by one their tender leaves unfold,
As if they knew that warmer suns were near,
 Nor longer sought to hide from winter's cold:
And when with darker growth thy leaves are seen,
 To veil from view the early robin's nest,
I love to lie beneath thy waving screen
 With limbs by summer's heat and toil oppressed;
And when the autumn winds have stripped thee bare,
 And round thee lies the smooth, untrodden snow,
When naught is thine that made thee once so fair,
 I love to watch thy shadowy form below,
And through thy leafless arms to look above
On stars that brighter beam, when most we need their love.

Jones Very.

TREE BIRTHDAYS

Look! Look at me!
To-day's my birthday, Tree!
See, let me stand up, so,
Beside you. How you grow!
I'm tall, but oh,
I'll never be as tall as you, I know!
Tree, when's your birthday, please? Why don't you speak?
I seem so small,
And you're so tall,
Perhaps you have a birthday every week!

Mary Carolyn Davies.

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TREE PLANTING

Oh happy trees that we plant today,
What great good fortunes wait you!
For you will grow in sun and snow
Till fruit and flowers freight you.

Your winter covering of snow
Will dazzle with its splendor;
Your summer's garb with richest glow,
Will feast of beauty render.

In your cool shade will tired feet
Pause, weary, when 'tis summer;
And rest like this will be most sweet
To every tired comer.

Anon.

TREE-PLANTING

Joy for the sturdy trees;
Fanned by each fragrant breeze,
 Lovely they stand.
The song-birds o'er them trill;
They shade each tinkling rill;
They crown each swelling hill,
 Lowly or grand.

Plant them by stream and way,
Plant them where children play,
 And toilers rest;
In every verdant vale,
On every sunny swale;—
Whether to grow or fail,
 God knoweth best.

Select the strong, the fair;
Plant them with earnest care,—
 No toil is vain;
Plant in a fitter place,
Where, like a lovely face
Set in some sweeter grace,
 Change may prove gain.

God will his blessing send;
All things on Him depend,—
 His loving care
Clings to each leaf and flower,
Like ivy to its tower,—
His presence and His power
 Are everywhere.

Samuel Francis Smith.

TREES

In the Garden of Eden, planted by God,
There were goodly trees in the springing sod,—

Trees of beauty and height and grace,
To stand in splendor before His face.

Apple and hickory, ash and pear,
Oak and beech and the tulip rare,

The trembling aspen, the noble pine,
The sweeping elm by the river line;

Trees for the birds to build and sing,
And the lilac tree for a joy in spring;

Trees to turn at the frosty call
And carpet the ground for their Lord's footfall;

Trees for fruitage and fire and shade,
Trees for the cunning builder's trade;

Wood for the bow, the spear, and the flail,
The keel and the mast of the daring sail;

He made them of every grain and girth,
For the use of man in the Garden of Earth.

Then lest the soul should not lift her eyes
From the gift to the Giver of Paradise,

On the crown of a hill, for all to see,
God planted a scarlet maple tree.

Bliss Carman.

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THE TREES

There's something in a noble tree—
What shall I say? a soul?
For 'tis not form, or aught we see
In leaf or branch or bole.
Some presence, though not understood,
Dwells there always, and seems
To be acquainted with our mood,
And mingles in our dreams.

I would not say that trees at all
Were of our blood and race,
Yet, lingering where their shadows fall,
I sometimes think I trace
A kinship, whose far-reaching root
Grew when the world began,
And made them best of all things mute
To be the friends of man.

Held down by whatsoever might
Unto an earthly sod,
They stretch forth arms for air and light,
As we do after God;
And when in all their boughs the breeze
Moans loud, or softly sings,
As our own hearts in us, the trees
Are almost human things.

What wonder in the days that burned
With old poetic dream,
Dead Phaethon's fair sisters turned
To poplars by the stream!
In many a light cotillion stept
The trees when flutters blew;
And many a tear, 'tis said, they wept
For human sorrow too.

Mute, said I? They are seldom thus;
They whisper each to each,
And each and all of them to us,
In varied forms of speech.
"Be serious," the solemn pine
Is saying overhead;
"Be beautiful," the elm-tree fine
Has always finely said;

"Be quick to feel," the aspen still
Repeats the whole day long;
While, from the green slope of the hill,
The oak-tree adds, "Be strong."
When with my burden, as I hear
Their distant voices call,
I rise, and listen, and draw near,
"Be patient," say they all.

S. V. Cole.

TREES

The Oak is called the King of Trees,
The Aspen quivers in the breeze,
The Poplar grows up straight and tall,
The Pear-tree spreads along the wall,
The Sycamore gives pleasant shade,
The Willow droops in watery glade,
The Fir-tree useful timber gives,
The Beech amid the forest lives.

Sara Coleridge.

TREES

Of all the trees in England,
Her sweet three corners in,
Only the Ash, the bonnie Ash,
Burns sweet while it is green.

Of all the trees in England,
From sea to sea again,
The Willow loveliest stoops her boughs
Beneath the driving rain.

Of all the trees in England,
Past frankincense and myrrh,
There's none for smell, of bloom and smoke,
Like Lime and Juniper.

Of all the trees in England,
Oak, Elder, Elm and Thorn,
The Yew alone burns lamps of peace
For them that lie forlorn.

Walter De La Mare.

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THE TREES

Time is never wasted, listening to the trees;
If to heaven as grandly we arose as these,
Holding toward each other half their kindly grace,
Haply we were worthier of our human place.

Bending down to meet you on the hillside path,
Birch and oak and maple each his welcome hath;
Each his own fine cadence, his familiar word,
By the ear accustomed, always plainly heard.

Every tree gives answer to some different mood:
This one helps you, climbing; that for rest is good:
Beckoning friends, companions, sentinels, they are;
Good to live and die with, good to greet afar.

Take a poet with you when you seek their shade,—
One whose verse like music in a tree is made;
Yet your mind will wander from his rarest lay,
Lost in rhythmic measures that above you sway.

Leafy light and shadow flit across the book;
Flickering, swift suggestions; word, and thought, and look
Of a subtle Presence writing nobler things
On his open pages, than the poet sings.

They are poets, also; winds that turn their leaves
Waken a responsive tone that laughs or grieves;
As your thoughts within you changefully are stirred,
Prophecy or promise, lilt or hymn, is heard.

Never yet has poet sung a perfect song,
But his life was rooted like a tree's, among
Earth's great, feeding forces,—even as crag and mould,
Rhythms that stir the forest by firm fibres hold.

Harmonies ethereal haunt his topmost bough,
Upward from the mortal 'drawn, he knows not how:
The old, sacred story of celestial birth
Rising from terrestrial; heaven revealed through earth.

Dear, inspiring, friendly dwellers of the wood,
Always reaching downward something grand or good
From the lofty spaces where you breathe and live;
Royally unconscious, careless what you give!

O ye glorious creatures, heirs with us of earth!
Might we win the secret of our loftier birth,—
From our depths of being grow like you, and climb
To our heights of blessing,—life would be sublime!

Lucy Larcom.

THE TREES

The poplar is a French tree,
A tall and laughing wench tree,
A slender tree, a tender tree,
That whispers to the rain—
An easy, breezy flapper tree,
A lithe and blithe and dapper tree,
A girl of trees, a pearl of trees,
Beside the shallow Aisne.

The oak is a British tree,
And not at all a skittish tree;
A rough tree, a tough tree,
A knotty tree to bruise;
A drives-his-roots-in-deep tree,
A what-I-find-I-keep tree,
A might tree, a blighty tree,
A tree of stubborn thews.

The pine tree is our own tree,
A grown tree, a cone tree,
The tree to face a bitter wind,
The tree for mast and spar—
A mountain tree, a fine tree,
A fragrant turpentine tree,
A limber tree, a timber tree,
And resinous with tar!

Christopher Morley.

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UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE

Under the greenwood tree,
Who loves to lye with me,
And turne his merrie Note
Unto the sweet Bird's throte:
Come hither, come hither, come hither,
Heere shall he see no enemie
But Winter and rough Weather.

Who doth ambition shunne
And loves to live i' the Sunne,
Seeking the food he eates
And pleased with what he gets:
Come hither, come hither, come hither,
Heere shall he see no enemie
But Winter and rough Weather.

William Shakespeare.

WHAT DO WE PLANT WHEN WE PLANT THE TREE

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
We plant the ship which will cross the sea,
We plant the mast to carry the sails,
We plant the planks to withstand the gales—
The keel, the keelson, and beam and knee,—
We plant the ship when we plant the tree.

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
We plant the house for you and me.
We plant the rafters, the shingles, the floors,
We plant the studding, the lath, the doors,
The beams and siding, all parts that be,
We plant the house when we plant the tree.

What do we plant when we plant the tree?
A thousand things that we daily see.
We plant the spire that out-towers the crag,
We plant the staff for our country's flag,
We plant the shade from the hot sun free;
We plant all these when we plant the tree.

Henry Abbey.

THE WILLOWS

By the little river,
Still and deep and brown,
Grow the graceful willows,
Gently dipping down;

Dipping down and brushing
Everything that floats—
Leaves and logs and fishes,
And the passing boats.

Were they water maidens
In the long ago,
That they lean out sadly
Looking down below?

In the misty twilight
You can see their hair,
Weeping water maidens
That were once so fair.

Walter Prichard Eaton.

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WOODMAN, SPARE THAT TREE

Woodman, spare that tree!
Touch not a single bough!
In youth it sheltered me,
And I'll protect it now.
'Twas my forefather's hand
That placed it near his cot;
There, woodman, let it stand,
Thy axe shall harm it not!

That old familiar tree,
Whose glory and renown
Are spread o'er land and sea—
And wouldst thou hew it down?
Woodman, forbear thy stroke!
Cut not its earth-bound ties;
Oh, spare that aged oak,
Now towering to the skies!

When but an idle boy
I sought its grateful shade;
In all their gushing joy
Here, too, my sisters played.
My mother kissed me here;
My father pressed my hand—
Forgive this foolish tear,
But let that old oak stand!

My heart-strings round thee cling,
Close as thy bark, old friend!
Here shall the wild-bird sing,
And still thy branches bend,
Old tree! the storm still brave!
And, woodman, leave the spot;
While I've a chance to save,
Thy axe shall harm it not.

George P. Morris.

WOODNOTES

As the sunbeams stream through liberal space
And nothing jostle or displace,
So waved the pine-tree through my thought
And fanned the dreams it never brought.
"Whether is better, the gift or the donor?
Come to me,"
Quoth the pine-tree,
"I am the giver of honor.
My garden is the cloven rock,
And my manure the snow;
And drifting sand-heaps feed my stock,
In summer's scorching glow.
He is great who can live by me:
The rough and bearded forester
Is better than the lord;
God fills the scrip and canister,
Sin piles the loaded board.
The lord is the peasant that was,
The peasant the lord that shall be;
The lord is hay, the peasant grass,
One dry, and one the living tree.
Who liveth by the ragged pine
Foundeth a heroic line;
Who liveth in the palace hall
Waneth fast and spendeth all.
He goes to my savage haunts,
With his chariot and his care;
My twilight realm he disenchants,
And finds his prison there.

“What prizes the town and the tower?
Only what the pine-tree yields;
Sinew that subdued the fields;
The wild-eyed boy, who in the woods
Chants his hymn to hills and floods,
Whom the city’s poisoning spleen
Made not pale, or fat, or lean;
Whom the rain and the wind purgeth,
Whom the dawn and the day-star urgeth,
In whose cheek the rose-leaf blusheth,
In whose feet the lion rusheth.
Iron arms and iron mold,
That know not fear, fatigue or cold.
I give my rafters to his boat,
My billets to his boiler’s throat,
And I will swim the ancient sea
To float my child to victory,
And grant to dwellers with the pine
Dominion o’er the palm and vine.
Who leaves the pine-tree leaves his friend,
Unnerves his strength, invites his end.
Cut a bough from my parent stem,
And dip it in thy porcelain vase;
A little while each russet gem
Will swell and rise with wonted grace;
But when it seeks enlarged supplies,
The orphan of the forest dies.
Whoso walks in solitude
And inhabiteth the wood,
Choosing light, wave, rock and bird,
Before the money-loving herd,
Into that forester shall pass,
From these companions, power and grace.
Clean shall he be, without, within,
From the old adhering sin,

All ill dissolving in the light
Of this triumphant piercing sight:
Not vain, nor sour, nor frivolous;
Not mad, athirst nor garrulous;
Grave, chaste, contented, though retired,
And of all other men desired.
On him the light of star and moon
Shall fall with purer radiance down;
All constellations of the sky
Shed their virtue through his eye.
Him nature giveth for defense
His formidable innocence;
The mountain sap, the shells, the sea,
All spheres, all stones, his helpers be;
He shall meet the speeding year,
Without wailing, without fear;
He shall be happy in his love,
Like to like shall joyful prove;
He shall be happy whilst he woos,
Muse-born, a daughter of the Muse."


Selected.

Ralph Waldo Emerson.

The following is an additional list of poems which it has not been possible to include in this volume. Some of the poems are to be found in sources other than those given.

The Apple Tree In "The Magic Flute"	<i>Rose Fyleman</i>
Arbor Day In "For Days and Days"	<i>Annette Wynne</i>
A Ballad of Trees and the Master In "Poems"	<i>Sydney Lanier</i>
City Trees In "Second April"	<i>Edna St. Vincent Millay</i>
Friendly Tree In "For Days and Days"	<i>Annette Wynne</i>
Geography In "Poems by a Little Girl"	<i>Hilda Conkling</i>
The Pine Tree In "Shoes of the Wind"	<i>Hilda Conkling</i>
Spring Planting-time In "Stories and Poems"	<i>Celia Thaxter</i>
The Tree In "Golden Treasury of Modern Lyrics"	<i>John Masefield</i>
Trees In "Trees and Other Poems"	<i>Joyce Kilmer</i>
Trees and Fairies In "Fairy Green"	<i>Rose Fyleman</i>
Waiting to Grow In "Songs of Tree-top and Meadow"	<i>Frank French</i>
Weeping-willow In "Shoes of the Wind"	<i>Hilda Conkling</i>
The Willow Princesses In "The Magic Flute"	<i>Rose Fyleman</i>

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